

# WITHOUT LOVE IN THE DREAM IT WILL NEVER COME TRUE<sup>†</sup>

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§1. The motif of a cycle of folktales present in many postegyptian cultures throughout the world involves a traveler coming upon a group of people refusing to bury the corpse of a man who had died without paying his debts. With his last penny he pays off the dead person's debts and gives him decent burial. The traveler then continues his journey and is met by a person who saves his life and aids him in some impossible tasks. At the end of the story the person discloses himself as the man whose corpse he had befriended, as *the grateful dead*. This simple, yet universal idea about giving and receiving, about cyclic balance between life and death comes with a visual equivalent, "in the strangest of places if you look at it right"\*

§2. Omar Khayyam was a 12th century Persian mathematician, whose work is seen as a precursor to non-Euclidian geometry, a branch of mathematics whose full discovery came many centuries later and had a ripple effect which went far beyond the boundaries of mathematics and science. Having opened the possibility of nonconflicting coexistence of parallel realities it has transformed the very basis of our modes of reasoning. But more importantly, Omar Khayyam was also a poet, who left behind Rubaiyat, a collection of short poems and folklore imagery. In the early 20th century English translation of Rubaiyat, quatrain no. 26 which addresses the perpetual intertwining of the life-death continuum, comes with the visual equivalent of *the grateful dead* – a drawing of a skeleton and roses.

§3. Much of what life offers is captured by the rose symbolism. Like a rose life holds dangerous beauty, it is quick and fleeting. The rose and the thorn, like sorrow and gladness are linked together. And when it hurts all memories of ten stings from the rose thorn are washed away with just one look at a vibrant red rose petal. Those who do scientific research, or arts for that matter, know very well that this is just the way things are. Having seemingly wasted days, months, even years over a real hard question, there is nothing at all that beats the exhilarating high when the solution finally appears. This is the power unique only to science and arts. And a university is not really a university without an unconditional commitment to excellent scientific research in the international

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<sup>†</sup>from "Help On The way", The Grateful Dead, lyrics Robert Hunter

\*from "Scarlet Begonias", The Grateful Dead, lyrics Robert Hunter

arena as the only relevant competition space. This is the defining postulate of a university as an institution where knowledge is created and transferred to younger generations, of a university as a sanctuary, a safe heaven for outliers, for those who dare to think and act out of the box. This has always been my position. Was just as strong on March 31, 1990 in the interview given to the local newspaper *Primorske novice* in a first ever public mentioning of a need to start a university here in Koper, as it is today after having served eight years as a rector of this university.

§4. I am certain that the University of Primorska will continue along this path. It has gone way to far into the world to come back being just another regional university. Remaining committed to excellent scientific research the leadership of this university will be perfectly well equipped to deal with two problems rising up on the horizon. First, how to reverse the unpleasant trend of an increasing number of Slovenian students choosing international over Slovenian universities. And second how to deal with an increasing number of smart, ambitious young people choosing not to go to universities at all. This should come as a dire warning for if the trend continues the very reason for existence of universities is on the line.

§5. Before I go, just a short ritual of gratitude. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my colleagues at the university, at the rector's conference, my collaborators all over the world, my friends. And of course, to my folks back home, my emotions in that department are better left unspoken. And in view of the fact that these eight years need a nice round symmetry a "thank you" goes also to all those who have fiercely opposed my views and my handling of the university matters.

§6. I would like to mention five names though. One of the reason being that 5 is the smallest number where the rational starts turning into the intuitive. In a reversal of the story from the beginning of my speech, I am grateful to five people who are not with us any longer. Will start with my father and my brother Andrej, then my PhD supervisor Crispin Nash-Williams, and of course Jerry Garcia, and last, also chronologically, Ina Križaj. Thank you for sharing with me this space so special and hard to tap into, the space eyes cannot see, but our hearts can and do touch it if only on rare occasions.

§7. I am almost there now. Best wishes to the new leadership. Aim high. Everything will be fine, just the way it is supposed to be. The universe said so. Of course, there are things you will still need to take care of on your on. Using words of the same lyricist I chose eight years ago at the start of my first term, succinctly and straight to the point: "Without love in the dream it will never come true." Fare thee well, University of Primorska.